

Serial No.: 10/532,598
Atty. Docket No.: P70481US0

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed January 23, 2008, has been carefully reviewed and, by this Amendment, claims 10-18 have been canceled and claims 19-38 have been added. Accordingly, claims 19-38 are pending in the application. Claims 19 and 30 are independent.

As an initial matter, Applicants have amended the specification to conform with U.S. practice and to reflect the terminology used in the new claims. No new matter has been added.

The Examiner objected to claim 18 as containing informalities. Claim 18 has been canceled.

The Examiner rejected claims 10-12 and 14-18 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,701,159 to Brown et al. ("Brown"). Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the Examiner rejected claim 13 as being unpatentable over Brown in view of U.S. Publ. No 2002/0123786 to Gittings et al.

Claims 10-18 having been canceled herein, the rejections are technically moot. However, with respect to new claims 19-38, Applicants provide the following remarks.

As set forth in new claims 19 and 30, the present invention is directed to a coupling device having a first connector part and a second connector part, with each connector part including

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at least one connecting portion configured to engage with at least one corresponding connecting portion of the other connector part. When so engaged, the first and second connector parts are coupled in substantially linear alignment with one another.

The coupling device further includes a releasable locking member that is configured to assist in disengaging the engagement between the connecting portions. This releasable locking member has a first engagement structure and *is secured to the first connector part in a fixed longitudinal position* while being rotatably movable about the longitudinal axis at that position. The second connector part has a second engagement structure that is complementary with the first engagement structure so that they engage with one another through respective axial rotational movement. When so rotated, the engagement structures act to "lock" the connection between the first and second connector parts to prevent them from being axially pulled apart in an absence of respective counter-rotational movement of the first and second engagement structures. Further, because the releasable locking member *is connected to the first connector part* during manufacture so that such member cannot slide freely in an axial direction, the coupling device according to the present invention is not shown or suggested by the prior art.

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Brown discloses a catheter set having a multilumen locking connector composed of a female lock adapter 40 and a male lock adapter 62. After the male and female lock adapters are engaged, a locking ring 64 having a base 71 that encircles the male lock adapter 62 is screwed onto the female lock adapter 40 to create a tight seal (see column 4, lines 51-65). The locking ring 64 is not, however, secured to the male adapter prior to engagement with the female adapter but instead *is free to move axially* along the adapter 110 (see Figure 6); there is nothing to prevent the locking ring from sliding off the lock adapter and up along the tube. This is contrary to the structure set forth in the presently claimed invention.

As claimed herein, the coupling device of the present invention has a releasable locking member that is connected or assembled with the first connector part in a fixed axial position with respect thereto during manufacture. This connection prevents the releasable locking member from sliding axially along the length of the tube or line to which the coupling device is attached, making it much easier for the user, particularly a disabled user, to reach and utilize the member. With the structure taught by Brown, the locking member could easily slide out of such a person's reach, making use of the coupling device much more difficult and possible

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necessitating that the person receive assistance, an undesired predicament.

Nor is there anything in Brown that would suggest assembly of the locking mechanism with the connector part as claimed herein. On the contrary, rather than being directed to a device for use by a patient on his or her own, Brown is directed to a multilumen catheter tube that is surgically inserted and in which the ability to move the locking ring away from the lock adapters during connection thereof may be advantageous and/or necessary.

For at least the foregoing reasons, claims 19 and 30 are patentable over the prior art. Favorable consideration and allowance thereof is requested.

Claims 20-29 and 31-38 are in condition for allowance as claims properly dependent on an allowable base claim and for the subject matter contained therein. Favorable consideration and allowance thereof is therefore requested.

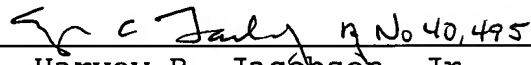
With this amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or comments,

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the Examiner is cordially invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the present application can receive an early Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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